



1996 RTA Transit Rider/Nonrider Survey



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Chicago, Illinois
Regional Report Summary
February 1997

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Introduction

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This survey effort gathered comparative information from both Northeastern Illinois residents who ride transit and those who do not. Definitions of Riders and Nonriders are provided below.

It is important to note that definitions used in this research effort are much more broad than those typically used in Service Board efforts. This broader scope is intentional, as an objective of this survey was to better understand the attitudes associated with varying degrees of ridership, from every-day commuters to once-per-year transit travelers. Readers are therefore encouraged to exercise caution in comparing these survey findings with findings of existing or future Service Board customer research.

In this same spirit, Riders were segmented into three groups. It was believed that while commuters and other regular riders form the mainstay of any transit agency, significant opportunities for increased ridership exist among those who currently ride, but only occasionally or incidentally.

- **Riders:** Riders are composed of individuals who have ridden any system – CTA, Metra, or Pace – at least once in the past year.
 - **Primary Riders:** Primary Riders are composed of those individuals who ride any system five or more times monthly.
 - **Occasional Riders:** Occasional Riders are defined as individuals who ride any system one to four times monthly.
 - **Incidental Riders:** Incidental Riders are individuals who have not ridden any of the systems within the past month, but have used CTA, Metra or Pace at least once in the past year.

Also important was an understanding of the differences between riders and nonriders.

- **Nonriders:** Nonriders are defined as individuals within the RTA service area – as defined by the zip codes served by CTA, Metra, and/or Pace – who have not ridden public transit within the past year.
- **Former Riders:** Former Riders are the subgroup of Nonriders who have ridden transit in the past two to five years.

Always Nonriders: Always Nonriders are those who have not ridden transit at all in the past five years.

Project History

The Northeastern Illinois region's travel market is large, complex, and ever changing, all of which make planning and providing valuable public transit service extremely challenging. To meet the challenge, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and its operating Service Boards — the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), the Commuter Rail Division (Metra), and the Suburban Bus Division (Pace) — continually strive to better understand this market and its needs.

This 1996 RTA Transit Rider/Nonrider study, a cooperative effort of the RTA, CTA, Metra and Pace — funded by the RTA — represents a comprehensive, regionwide effort to measure attitudes and awareness levels of the regions' transit users ("Riders") and nonusers ("Nonriders") regarding travel and public transportation in northeastern Illinois. It provides important new information regarding transit usage throughout the region and residents' attitudes and perceptions of public transportation.

Over 2,100 interviews were completed as a part of this survey. Responses are accurate with 95 percent confidence, with a margin of error, in most cases, no higher than plus or minus five percent.

Project Goals

The goals of this study were to:

- Identify opportunities for increasing transit ridership.
- Determine residents' attitudes toward public transportation in general, and the services provided by CTA, Metra, and Pace in particular.
- Identify residents' knowledge of and confidence in transit services.
- Measure residents' travel behavior and usage of CTA, Metra, and Pace.
- Identify key factors which determine travel mode choice of residents.
- Determine why former transit users and nonusers do not currently ride transit and why Occasional Riders do not ride more frequently.

Results of this research will enable the RTA and the Service Boards to segment the region's travel market based on travelers' stated behavior and attitudes. By identifying unique market segments, the agencies can continue to develop targeted planning and marketing strategies to maintain and attract ridership.

Methodology

The 1996 RTA Transit Rider/Nonrider Survey consists of 2,176 interviews with individuals, age 16 or older, from among a sample of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will County households. Under contract to the RTA, Northwest Research Group, Inc., conducted telephone interviews between September 13 and November 10, 1996.

Sampling Plan

A sample of over 48,000 telephone numbers was drawn using standard methods for developing a probability sample. This method insures that each household in the specified counties has an equal probability of being selected for an interview and that both households with listed and unlisted telephone numbers are included in the sample. While this method does not ensure against biases resulting from non- or multi-telephone households, nor from nonsampling errors, such as respondent refusals and incomplete responses, other precautions were taken to minimize the impact of these issues.

An approximately equal number of interviews was completed with those who do not use transit and live within the service area of each Service Board, totaling 400 from each Service Board. Three-hundred surveys each were conducted with CTA and Metra riders. However, because of the low incidence of Pace riders in the general population, fewer Pace rider interviews (totaling 207) were completed. Subsequently, the data were weighted to reflect the actual rider and nonrider proportions of each Service Board and service area. In this way, each Service Board sample did not over- or under-represent the actual population of its riders and nonriders. The weighting process did not change the total sample size.

This sample size provides an overall level of precision of plus or minus three percent for the entire sample and no greater than plus or minus 5.67 percent for the key rider/nonrider segments. In all but a few instances, the segment sample sizes produce a margin of error no greater than five percent.

Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaire contained a core set of questions asked of all respondents, and subsets of questions asked of key subgroups (Riders, Nonriders, Former Riders, etc. — see page 6 for definitions). Computer-assisted telephone interviewing technology was used to administer the survey. The average time required to administer the survey was 20 minutes.

The questionnaire was pretested with 89 respondents over a three-day period. During this time, changes were made to improve the wording and flow of the questionnaire. Questions that were redundant or not pertinent to the overall study objectives were dropped from the questionnaire. The pretest results were not included in the final survey results.

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Key Findings

The research results plainly illustrate the complexity of the RTA system and the markets it serves. This page summarizes the key regional findings.

- **A significant proportion of the region's residents ride transit.**
 - Nearly two-thirds of the region's residents have used the RTA system in the past year.
 - Over one-third have used the system in the past thirty days.
 - Only 20 percent of all residents have not ridden the RTA system in the past five years.
- **The system serves all ages, incomes and ethnic backgrounds. In fact, regionwide, Riders and Nonriders do not significantly differ in these demographic respects.**
- **Nearly eight of ten transit Riders choose to ride transit instead of traveling by car.**
- **Riders often use each of the region's three transit systems, CTA, Metra and Pace (separately or in combination).**
 - Almost half of all transit riders use more than one of the three systems.
 - Eleven percent have ridden all three systems in the past thirty days.
- **Attitudes are most positive for transit's perceived pragmatic benefits, such as cost, environmental friendliness, congestion relief, and protection from accidents and auto wear and tear.**
- **Attitudes are least positive for the level of personal control transit affords, such as control and flexibility of scheduling, privacy and personal space, and convenience of travel.**
- **Most people are at least somewhat likely to ride the RTA system in the next year.**
 - Almost half are very likely to ride transit in the coming year.
 - Just over one-quarter are not likely to ride in the coming year.
- **Important market opportunities exist for maintaining and growing ridership.**
 - Fifteen percent of residents show high potential for riding transit more in the future.
 - Over 30 percent are likely to remain loyal transit riders.
 - On the other hand, seven percent of current riders are vulnerable; that is, they may not continue to ride in the coming year.
 - One quarter of the region's residents will be unlikely to ride transit, regardless of service and marketing efforts.

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Market Segments to Grow Ridership

- Definitions of Market Segments/Segment Size (P. 11)
 - Loyal Riders
 - Vulnerable Riders
 - High Potential Riders
 - Possible Riders
 - Staunch Nonriders
- Segment Demographics (P. 14)
- Key Segments' Attitudes Toward Public Transportation (P. 16)

Rider/Nonrider Definitions:

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 - **Primary Riders** are composed of those individuals who ride any system five or more times monthly.
 - **Occasional Riders** are defined as individuals who ride any system one to four times monthly.
 - **Incidental Riders** are individuals who have not ridden any of the systems within the past month, but have used CTA, Metra or Pace at least once in the past year.
- **Nonriders** are defined as individuals within the RTA service area – as defined by the zip codes served by CTA, Metra, and/or Pace – who have not ridden public transit within the past year.
 - **Former Riders** are the subgroup of Nonriders who have ridden transit in the past two to five years.
 - **Always Nonriders** are those who have not ridden transit at all in the past five years.

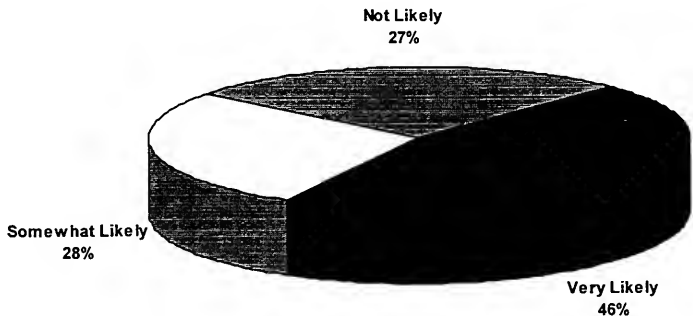
Definitions of Market Segments / Segment Size

Ridership growth can be achieved by some combination of marketing and service strategies aimed at: (1) retaining existing riders; (2) increasing frequency of riding, particularly among Occasional and Incidental riders; and (3) acquiring new riders. The following findings provide guidance on retaining and increasing the riding frequency of existing riders and identifies potential strategies for adding new riders.

Respondents were asked their likelihood of using each transit system in the next year. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale ranging from "very likely to ride" to "not at all likely to ride."

- Nearly three-quarters (74%) of all respondents indicate that they are "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to ride transit in the next year.
 - Close to half (46%) of all respondents indicate they would be "very likely" to ride one or more systems in the next year. Another quarter (28%) suggest they would be "somewhat likely."
- Interestingly, while 37 percent of all respondents are Nonriders, only 27 percent of respondents indicated that they were "not likely" to ride in the coming year. The fact that at least some who currently do not ride will consider transit in the future suggests that the personal value of the region's transit system is apparent to residents regardless of their ridership status.

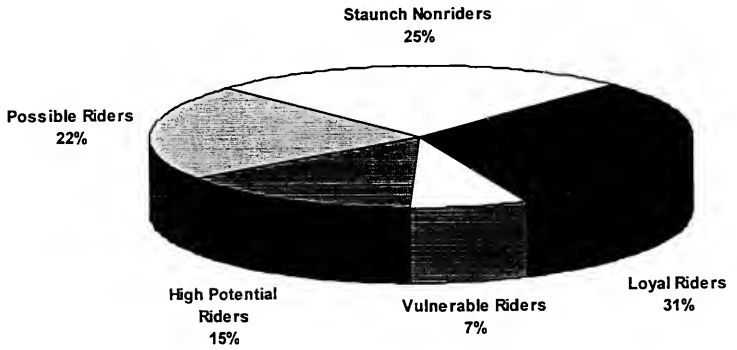
FIGURE 1
LIKELIHOOD OF USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN THE NEXT YEAR



Based on current ridership and likelihood of riding in the future, five market segments were identified. These are:

- **Loyal Riders:** Current Primary and Occasional Riders who are “very likely” to ride in the next year. Loyal Riders represent 31 percent of all respondents and 81 percent of all Primary and Occasional Riders.
- **Vulnerable Riders:** Current Primary and Occasional Riders who are “somewhat likely” or “not likely” to use public transportation in the next year. While Vulnerable Riders represent only seven percent of all respondents, they are 19 percent of all Primary and Occasional Riders and therefore represent a potentially large number of trips.
- **High Potential Riders:** Incidental Riders and Nonriders who are “very likely” to use public transportation in the next year. One out of seven (15%) respondents and nearly one out of four (24%) Incidental Riders and Nonriders are High Potential Riders.
- **Possible Riders:** Incidental Riders and Nonriders who are “somewhat likely” to use public transportation in the next year. Twenty-two percent (22%) of all respondents or 36 percent of all Incidental Riders and Nonriders are Possible Riders.
- **Staunch Nonriders:** Incidental Riders and Nonriders who are “not likely” to use public transportation in the next year. One out of four (25%) respondents and 41 percent of all Incidental Riders and Nonriders can be considered Staunch Nonriders.

FIGURE 2
KEY MARKET SEGMENTS



Segment Demographics

Several key characteristics act as the best predictors of market segment membership. These are illustrated in Table 1.

	Loyal Riders	Vulnerable Riders	High Potential	Possible Riders	Staunch Nonriders
AUTO AVAILABILITY					
Yes	86%	92%	92%	97%	97%
No	14	8	8	3	3
GENDER					
Male	47%	37%	41%	37%	41%
Female	53	63	59	63	59
AGE					
Mean	40 yrs.	39 yrs.	43 yrs.	43 yrs.	46 yrs.
ETHNIC BACKGROUND					
White / Caucasian	73%	68%	70%	75%	80%
African-American	15	15	18	11	13
Asian / Pacific-Islander	3	7	4	5	1
Hispanic	6	9	6	6	4
Other	3	2	2	3	3
INCOME					
Less than \$20,000	13%	19%	16%	11%	11%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	24	28	28	24	23
\$40,000 - \$74,999	36	39	36	45	42
\$75,000 and Over	28	16	21	19	25
PRIMARY COMMUTE MODE					
Drive Alone	38%	65%	79%	88%	91%
CTA or Pace Bus	13	11	2	0	0
CTA or Metra Train	36	8	5	0	0
Other	13	16	14	13	9

- Lack of auto availability differentiates those likely and not likely to use transit.
 - An above-average number (14%) of Loyal Riders do not have access to a car.
 - Eight percent of Vulnerable Riders and High Potential Riders do not have a car available for their personal use. Failing to meet their expectations for transit could lead to defection among the 92 percent of this segment that have an auto available.
 - An above average percent of High Potential Riders – 33 percent – do not commute outside the home (i.e., they do not make trips to and from work). This means that efforts to attract this segment to transit need to address both commute and discretionary (i.e., noncommute) trips.
 - Only three percent of Possible Riders and Staunch Nonriders do not have access to a car.
- Market segments are clearly differentiated by member's commuter status. Aspects of their commute trip also differentiate these market segments.

- Nearly half (49%) of all Loyal Riders commute to work or school via public transportation. Perhaps surprisingly, however, some (38%) Loyal Riders drive alone when commuting. This implies that the segment's loyalty to transit rests not on commute service (travel to work or school) alone.
 - Among those Loyal Riders who presently drive alone to work or school, a surprising number – 24 percent – live in the suburbs and commute by auto to the City of Chicago. Eighty-eight percent of these commuters travel from a suburb to downtown Chicago. This would suggest that they may be comfortable using transit while downtown or elsewhere in the city, but find that adequate service is not available (or they do not know of the availability of service) from the suburb where they live. An additional 30 percent of Loyal Riders who presently drive alone to work or school commute from Chicago to a suburb or suburban city.
- Sixty-five percent of Vulnerable Riders currently drive alone to work or school. Of these, 41 percent commute from Chicago to the suburbs. Should they decrease their transit use in the future, it would primarily impact noncommute service ridership.
- The majority – 79 percent – of High Potential Riders currently drive alone when commuting. Those few listed as taking the bus or train are primarily commuting to business appointments and use the bus or train occasionally for this purpose.
 - High Potential Riders may be difficult to reach given current service. Seventy-two percent commute from suburb to suburb where service is traditionally lacking. However, 21 percent commute from the suburbs to Chicago. Capturing this portion of the market could represent a significant increase in ridership.
 - Work hours also represent a potential barrier to ridership. One out of four High Potential Riders work off-peak hours. An additional one out of four work a combination of peak and off-peak hours. Only 47 percent of those working in downtown Chicago work peak hours. Despite this barrier, even capturing those who work downtown and who work peak hours or a combination of peak and off-peak hours and who might be able to arrange an alternative ride home could represent a significant increase in ridership.
- Eighty-eight percent of Possible Riders currently drive alone when commuting. More than two-thirds of these commute from suburb to suburb. Only nine percent commute from a suburban location to Chicago. It is unlikely that Possible Riders could be attracted as commuters. It is more likely that this market represents some potential for ridership as Occasional and Incidental riders using public transportation for noncommute purposes.

Key Segments' Attitudes Toward Public Transportation

Respondents were asked to indicate how well each of twenty-nine statements describes using public transportation. A statistical technique known as factor analysis was then used to understand how respondents might group these statements together and to identify the larger underlying dimensions by which customers think about public transportation. Factor analysis examines the relationships of each of a large number of variables with every other one to determine which are highly correlated with others. The process yields a smaller set of factors or summary variables that reflect underlying or latent dimensions.

- Based on this analysis, respondents think about transit on three basic dimensions:
 - **Comfort / Safety:** contains those statements related to comfort and cleanliness of ride, having a place to sit, being assured of personal safety from crime and simply from being bothered by other people, a sense of personal space, and not having to worry about transporting packages.
 - **Control:** contains those statements related to scheduling, control of scheduling, flexibility, speed and timeliness, and convenience of using public transportation. It also contains two statements that reflect the image of a mode choice as it pertains to the person.
 - **Pragmatic Benefits:** contains those statements related to the pragmatic benefits of using public transportation such as cost, being good for the environment, not having to worry about accidents or wear and tear on their vehicle, and reducing congestion.

Table 2 illustrates how individual attributes were placed into these three dimensions.

TABLE 2 PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – PRIMARY DIMENSIONS		
Comfort / Safety	Control	Pragmatic Benefits
I am assured that I will not be bothered by other people. I am assured of my personal safety from crime. I don't have to worry about who is going to sit next to me. It is clean. It gets me in the right frame of mind for the rest of the day. It is comfortable. I have a place to sit. It enables me to arrive at my destination feeling clean and fresh. I don't have to worry about carrying packages or parcels. It gives me an opportunity to be alone to think. I can count on it to get me to where I am going on time. I don't have to worry about bad weather.	I am able to come and go when I want to. It offers me the flexibility I need for my schedule. I can control my own schedule. Conveniently located to my trip origin and destination. It's easy to arrange. I am able to get home in an emergency. It is appropriate for a person in my position. It gets me where I am going the quickest way possible. I don't have to change from one mode to another. It is consistent with the type of person I am. I can count on it to get me to where I am going on time.	I don't have to worry about wear and tear on my vehicle. It minimizes my risk of getting into a traffic accident. It is good for the environment. It doesn't contribute to traffic congestion. I can get other things done while traveling. It gets me where I want to go without feeling stressed. I can count on it to get me where I am going on time. I don't have to worry about bad weather. It does not cost much.

A variable was computed for each dimension by averaging together the scores for the statements contained in the dimension. This score ranges from 1, meaning the dimension "does not describe public transportation at all," to 7, meaning the dimension "describes public transportation very well." Comparing these values across the different rider segments provides insight into how different markets perceive public transportation.

Respondents' descriptions of transit were analyzed to better understand how perceptions of transit vary by market segment. Table 3 indicates the percentage of respondents who believe that the dimensions describe public transportation well.

	Loyal Riders	Vulnerable Riders	High Potential Riders	Possible Riders	Staunch Nonriders
Comfort / Safety	61%	50%	48%	36%	28%
Control	63	44	44	28	21
Benefits	85	75	80	68	59

- Looking at the "Control" dimension, perceptions of the flexibility, convenience of access to service, and the "person-image" of public transportation are the key attributes that distinguish market segments. It is also this dimension that most clearly differentiates the five key segments.
 - Loyal Riders have the most positive perceptions of the Control dimensions of transit (63%), while Possible Riders and Staunch Nonriders have the least.
 - With the exception of Loyal Riders, all segments are near or below average in terms of their strong agreement with the Control dimension; fewer than half (44%) of Vulnerable and High Potential Riders and a quarter or fewer of Possible Riders (28%) and Staunch Nonriders (21%) believe Control does a good job describing public transportation.
 - Thirteen percent of Staunch Nonriders believe that Control "does not describe public transportation at all," while only two percent of this segment believe that Control "describes public transportation very well." It is likely that little can be done to change these attitudes and attract riders from this market segment.
- Comfort is the rated next highest dimension across all but the Loyal Rider segment, but at a generally low level of agreement (from 61% of Loyal Riders to 28% of Staunch Nonriders).
 - Sixty-one percent of Loyal Riders and approximately half of Vulnerable (50%) and High Potential Riders (48%) believe Comfort does at least a fair job of describing public transit.
 - Possible Riders and Staunch Nonriders feel most strongly that Comfort does not describe public transportation, with 11 percent of Possible Riders and 25 percent of Staunch Nonriders believing Comfort hardly describes or does not describe transit at all.

- In general, the Pragmatic Benefits of transit are best received by all market segments.
- Eighty-five percent of Loyal Riders and 80 percent of High Potential Riders believe that the statements which reflect the Pragmatic Benefits of using public transportation accurately describe using public transportation.
- High Potential Riders have more positive views of public transportation in terms of its Pragmatic Benefits than do Vulnerable Riders. In this they are more similar to Loyal Riders. This represents an important marketing opportunity.
- Nearly seven out of ten (68%) of Possible Riders and over half (59%) of Staunch Nonriders agree that transit possesses Pragmatic Benefits, such as reasonable cost, environmental friendliness, and congestion relief. However, these segments' lower level of agreement with the Control and Comfort dimensions suggest that the strength of pragmatic benefits alone are likely not sufficient to "win out" over negative perceptions of control and comfort.

Rider/Nonrider Characteristics

- Incidence of Riders (P. 22)
- Rider and Nonrider Demographics (P. 24)
- Transit Systems Used (P. 25)
- Awareness of RTA and Service Boards (P. 26)
- Attitudes Toward Public Transportation (P. 27)

Rider/Nonrider Definitions:

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To gain an understanding of how many people in the region ride transit — that is, market share — how often they ride, and, if they do not currently ride, determine if they previously rode transit, incidence levels were calculated. These are summarized below and illustrated by Figure 3 on the following page.

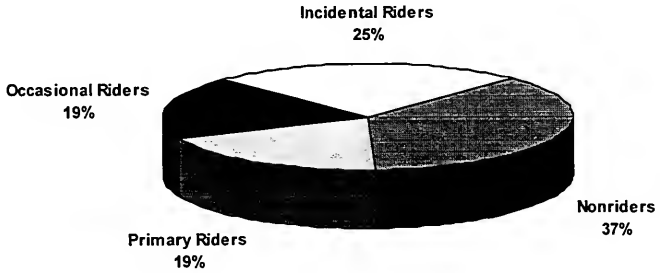
Riders

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the region's residents used the RTA system at least once in the past year.
 - Moreover, 38 percent have used the system in the past month, with 19 percent riding frequently (five or more times), and equal percentage riding occasionally (one to four times). This would suggest two broad strategies for RTA and its Service Boards – (1) retain current Primary Riders; and (2) increase frequency of riding among Occasional Riders. Achievement of these strategies is likely to have a significant impact on ridership in the region as a whole.
 - Primary ridership is highest in Cook County and lowest in Kane and McHenry Counties.
 - A higher incidence of Occasional Riders lives in Lake and McHenry Counties.
 - One out of four (25%) area residents are Incidental Riders. That is, they have ridden public transportation at least once in the past year, but not in the past month.

Nonriders

- More than one out of three (37%) area residents have not used public transportation in the past year. The highest incidences of Nonriders are in Kane County and Will Counties.
 - Of these Nonriders, 47 percent formerly rode transit (that is, within the past two to five years).
 - During that time span, 10 percent rode frequently (five or more times per month).
 - Thirty-seven percent formerly rode transit occasionally (one to four times monthly).
 - Fifty-three percent of Nonriders have not ridden transit in the past five years. This represents only one out of five (20%) of all area residents.

**FIGURE 3
RIDERS AND NONRIDERS**



**TABLE 4
INCIDENCE OF RIDERS AND NONRIDERS BY COUNTY**

	Cook	DuPage	Kane	Lake	McHenry	Will
Primary Riders	22%	14%	5%	12%	9%	18%
Occasional Riders	19	21	18	24	23	17
Incidental Riders	27	23	25	22	26	17
Nonriders	33	42	52	42	42	47

Rider and Nonrider Demographics

There are both similarities and differences between Primary Riders (rode five or more times monthly), Occasional Riders (rode one to four times monthly), and Nonriders (did not ride in past year). Table 5 compares these groups:

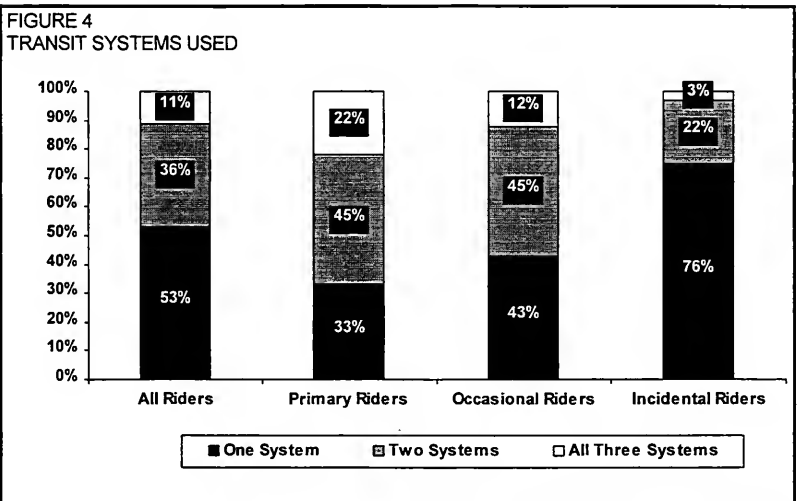
	Primary Riders	Occasional Riders	Incidental Riders	Nonriders
GENDER				
Male	46%	45%	41%	39%
Female	54	55	59	61
AGE				
Mean	39 yrs.	41 yrs.	42 yrs.	46 yrs.
ETHNIC BACKGROUND				
White / Caucasian	67%	78%	73%	78%
African-American	19	12	14	13
Asian / Pacific-Islander	5	2	4	2
Hispanic	7	6	8	4
Other	3	3	2	3
INCOME				
Less than \$20,000	14%	15%	13%	11%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	25	22	25	25
\$40,000 - \$74,999	34	39	40	43
\$75,000 and Over	26	24	22	22
TRANSIT DEPENDENCE				
Choice	65%	83%	NA *	NA *
Dependent	25	16	NA *	NA *
Voluntarily Dependent	9	1	NA *	NA *

* Dependence question not asked of these groups.

- Nonriders are significantly older than Riders, averaging 46 years versus 41 years of age.
- Though predominantly White/Caucasian, Primary Riders are more likely than other Riders and Nonriders to be members of an ethnic minority.
- Somewhat surprisingly, there is no relationship between income and ridership; like Nonriders, over 20 percent of Riders report household incomes in excess of \$75,000.
- Regionwide, 79 percent of Riders choose to use transit, by making the choice to either leave their car at home (74%) or to be "voluntarily dependent" – (i.e., not own a car) (5%). Only 21 percent of the region's transit Riders are truly dependent upon transit.
 - Dependence varies significantly by Service Board. Whereas 27 percent of CTA Riders and 43 percent of Pace Riders are transit dependent, only six percent of Metra Riders have no car alternative to riding transit.

Transit ridership patterns in the region are very complex. Many Riders use more than one system. Some of these trips are linked trips – beginning on one system and transferring to another system(s) en route. In other instances, Riders use different systems to meet their travel needs for separate trips. This high rate of multi-system use illustrates the great extent to which the RTA system serves the region as a whole. In doing so, it contradicts the common assumption that a clear dichotomy exists between city and suburban Riders and the systems that serve them.

- Eleven percent of all Riders have ridden all three systems – CTA, Metra, and Pace – at least once in the thirty day period before the study.
- Slightly more than one out of three (36%) Riders use two systems, with two out of three (66%) riding CTA and Metra, and one out of three (34%) riding Pace in combination with another system – most often the CTA.
- Of the 53 percent of all Riders who use one system only, over half (52%) use the CTA, 44 percent ride Metra, and four percent ride Pace.



	All Riders	Primary Riders	Occasional Riders	Incidental Riders
One System Only				
CTA	52%	56%	45%	54%
Metra	44%	36%	52%	42%
Pace	4%	8%	3%	4%
Two Systems				
CTA and Metra	66%	62%	72%	62%
CTA and Pace	25%	27%	20%	31%
Metra and Pace	9%	11%	8%	7%

Awareness of RTA and Service Boards

Respondents were asked on an unaided and aided basis their awareness of the RTA and the individual Service Boards. Unaided awareness was measured by asking respondents to list the names of all the region's transit services. Aided awareness was measured by asking respondents if they had "ever heard of [CTA, Metra, Pace, RTA]."

- In general, respondents are aware of the individual Service Boards. All achieved unaided awareness levels from 50 percent or more of the market. Total awareness levels – aided and unaided – exceed 95 percent for each Service Boards.
- Unaided awareness levels drop significantly from the most Primary Riders to Nonriders. This would suggest a region-wide opportunity for an advertising campaign to increase top-of-mind awareness of public transportation as a viable means to travel within the region.
- Unaided awareness of the RTA is relatively low – less than one out of four (21%) respondents named the RTA on an unaided basis. Even when aided, one out of five (19%) respondents are not aware of the RTA.

		Total	Primary Rider	Occasional Rider	Incidental Rider	Former Rider	Always Nonrider
RTA	Unaided	21%	25%	21%	22%	19%	18%
	Aided	59	60	56	59	63	60
	Not Aware	19	15	23	19	18	22
CTA	Unaided	58%	79%	61%	61%	50%	38%
	Aided	41	21	37	38	49	60
	Not Aware	1	0	2	1	1	2
METRA	Unaided	50%	60%	60%	49%	49%	34%
	Aided	48	39	39	49	50	63
	Not Aware	2	1	1	2	1	3
PACE	Unaided	50%	55%	55%	49%	53%	40%
	Aided	46	43	42	46	43	54
	Not Aware	4	2	3	4	4	6

Attitudes Toward Public Transportation

Respondents were asked how well a series of statements describes public transportation. Responses are based on the Comfort/Safety, Control, and Pragmatic Benefits dimensions discussed earlier (on page 14). As a reminder, Comfort/Safety includes attributes such as comfort and cleanliness, availability of a seat, assurance of personal space and security. Control includes attributes related to speed and timeliness of travel, control and flexibility of scheduling, and image of ridership. Benefits include cost, environmental and traffic congestion impacts, and automobile savings, such as less wear and tear and a lower chance of accidents. Table 7 indicates the percentage of respondents who believe that the dimensions describe public transportation well.

	Primary Riders	Occasional Riders	Former Riders	Always Nonriders	All Respondents
Comfort / Safety	60%	59%	33%	31%	45%
Control	66	53	24	25	41
Benefits	82	84	63	64	73

- Respondents believed that the statements reflecting pragmatic benefits best describe using public transportation. Nearly three out of four (73%) respondents feel these combined statements accurately describe public transportation. The results indicate an opportunity to leverage these benefits among riders and nonriders alike in promoting transit to the region.
 - Over 80 percent of all Riders agree with the Benefits factor, with 82 percent of Primary Riders and 84 percent of Occasional Riders agreeing.
 - Even a majority of Always Nonriders (64%) agree that Benefits, such as cost, and environmental and congestion relief, describes transit.
- On the other hand, fewer than half of all respondents believe that statements reflecting comfort and control describe the use of public transportation well. Moreover, one quarter (26%) of all respondents feel that Comfort does a below-average job of describing public transportation. Even more (31%) feel that Control does a below-average job. These factors represent potential barriers to increased use of public transportation.
 - Approximately 60 percent of all Riders and only 32 percent of Nonriders (33% of Former and 31% of Always) believe the Comfort factor describes transit.
 - Former Riders and Always Nonriders give the Control factor even lower scores, with only 24 percent and 25 percent respectively agreeing that Control describes transit. This is less than half the share of Primary (66%) and Occasional (53%) Riders agreeing. Moreover, seven percent of Former Riders and 13 percent of Always Nonriders believe that the Control factor "does not describe transit at all." The Control factor, therefore, appears to be a significant problem for those who do not use transit.

This summary report was prepared by the RTA Market Development Division. Much of the material in this report was excerpted from the 1996 RTA Rider/Nonrider Survey Technical Report, produced for the RTA by Northwest Research Group. The Technical Report contains a more detailed discussion of survey methodology, analysis, findings and recommendations regarding the Northeastern Illinois region's transit travel market. In addition, the Technical Report includes chapters specifically devoted to each the CTA, Metra and Pace markets.

Readers interested in the 1996 RTA Transit Rider/Nonrider Survey Technical Report can contact David S. Urbanczyk at the RTA, at (312) 917-0796.

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